

# **NAGA POLITICS**

**A Critical Account**

**Chandrika Singh**

**A Mittal Publication**

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## THE AUTHOR

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CHANDRIKA SINGH (b. 1944) took his M.A. degree in Political Science from the Magadh University in 1971 and obtained his Ph.D. degree from the same university in 1979. He joined the Sao Chang Government College Tuensang in 1971 and work there as a lecturer, Head of the Department and lastly Vice Principal. Thereafter, he joined the Nagaland University as a Head of the Department of Political Science in 1997 where he is still holding the charge of the Head of the Department. Singh has been the member of Board of the Post-Graduate studies, the School Board and Academic Council of Nagaland University.

Dr. Singh has already published books like, *Political Evolution of Nagaland* (1981), *Emergence of Arunachal Pradesh as a State* (1989), *Socialism in India* (1986), *Communist and Socialist Movement in India* (1987), *Indian Nationalism and National Movement* (1995), and *Constitutional Battles in India* (2001). He has also contributed a number of research articles in several leading journals and magazines. Besides these, he has presented papers in various seminars and conferences at regional and national levels. Dr. Singh while living in Northeast India for nearly three decades is a specialist in politics of the North-eastern region of the country.

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— A Critical Account

CHANDRIKA SINGH



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## PREFACE

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Nagaland, the sixteenth constituent state of the Union Republic of India, is a strife-torn state and carries a chequered and tearful history. The state and its people have witnessed prolonged constant bloody armed conflicts between the Naga freedom fighters and the India armed security personnel. People have also witnessed mutual distrusts among the Naga political leaders, internecine factional fights among various underground groups and irreparable loss of peace and prosperity of the people. All the efforts of the Naga intelligentsia groups from the days of the British rule to ensure the Naga's internal autonomies, their protection from outside interference and to achieve an independent political status have not yet yielded desired results. Rather the freedom movement has produced bitter fruits causing more and more mental agony, apathy, sufferings and unbearable troubles. Neither the British government before leaving India could grant the Nagas an independent status nor the Indian government could listen to and understand the viewpoints of the Naga people despite various memorandums and petitions placed by the Naga leaders before both the Governments. Soon after India's independence the Naga politics found itself in the whirlpool of two cross-currents—one was the armed conflicts with the Government of India and another the efforts of the Government of India and the moderate Nagas to persuade the underground leaders to solve the Naga issue peacefully through negotiations.

Peace and development are reciprocal terms that survive together. Peace in fact, is the condition for development while the latter is a criterion of the former. It is peace, which culminates into development and it is development that

provides stability and durability to peace. All the ideals related to progressive policies, plans, programmes etc. generate when peace prevails. Peace and progress cannot take place deeply in a chaotic atmosphere. War has been the greatest enemy of peace, though several wars have been fought on this planet in the name of protecting peace. However, war is not the only way to bring peace. Peace may be negotiated provided the parties concerned have the patience and wisdom. It is unfortunate that the Naga society has remained the subject of damaged peace. During the phase of 'head-hunting wars' no Naga could sleep soundly due to constant fear of outside invasions. The understanding of the Naga people changed with the arrival of the British in their land and introduction of Christianity among the animist Nagas. The Naga tribes, which were disintegrated due to their internecine wars, were integrated with the efforts of the British and advent of modern education introduced by the Christian Missionaries, which enabled the Naga people to understand the reality of life and to see the new world coming out of the veil of their parochial and narrow outlook. This sharpened the parochial political attitude of the Nagas. Thus the changes in their outlook and political consciousness enabled the Naga intellectuals to demand a separate political unit for their own. But the way which the Naga leaders adopted to achieve the goal forced them to land into the politics of insurgency that produced a number of troubles and inconveniences to the Naga people as a whole.

The politics of insurgency/militancy and peaceful efforts to negotiate peace are twins in Nagaland, which have been parallel to one another. It is all because the Naga intellectuals are divided so far the question of shaping future political status of Nagaland is concerned. These groups may be called as the extremist and the moderate. The former has been of the view that "the Nagas were a nation, completely free from the beginning of time" and "the Naga people have as much right for self-determination as any other people". To achieve their previous status, which their ancestors maintained before the arrival of the British in their land, the extremists prefer militancy as a means to liberate Nagaland from India's occupation. On the other hand, the moderate group, which is worried about poor economic resources of the state and backwardness of the general Naga people, likes neither complete separation of their land from India nor

militancy as a way to achieve the goal. No doubt, the moderate, too, prefer Naga's autonomies, but through peaceful means. That is why the Naga freedom movement has been the subject of division from the beginning. It were the moderates who without paying any heed to the threat posed to them by the extremists, negotiated the terms with the Government of India and accepted the Nagaland state under the Indian Union.

Once insurgency took place in Nagaland neither the constitutional provisions for the Naga's autonomies nor the efforts applied by the Indian leaders to persuade the extremists to accept the mainstream of Indian nationalism could produce desired results with the result that the armed tussle continued taking thousands of lives of the Naga people and Indian Jawans. Even creation of Nagaland state could not satisfy the people who were determined to have an independent Nagaland. Formation of Peace Mission and advent of ceasefire agreement between the undergrounds and the government of India, too, failed to solve the Naga issue and provide permanent peace in Nagaland. Though the democratic processes in Nagaland continued to work and the Naga electorate exercised their right to franchise despite the threat and warning given to them by the rebels, peace could not be restored. It is true that freedom struggle could never cease in Nagaland except causal pause, but the rift and division in the underground organisations damaged the process and progress of freedom struggle. On the other hand, the interest of the Naga people in general, went on increasing in participation of party politics, which also caused severe setback to the Naga freedom movement. Internal disputes among the rebel Naga leaders and growth of doubt and suspicion among themselves resulted in inner-fighting and factional killings weakening the strength of the movement.

It is good that ceasefire agreement between the Government of India and the leaders of the NSCN (I-M) is again going on and the process of peace talks has resumed creating hope among the Nagas. But the armed clashes between the NSCN (I-M) and the NSCN (K) have not yet stopped despite constant requests and appeals made to them by the Naga people. This has made the Naga mind upset.

The Naga peace has been injured several times. Peace in Nagaland has received numerous injuries and its wounds are still bleeding. It is good to note that the Nagas by nature are cheerful, peace loving and carefree, but their peace and prosperity both have been in stake. The general Naga mass has suffered a lot in the hands of both the Indian armies as well as security forces and the Naga militants. They have been living under the reign of constant fear and terror. Their political future is yet uncertain and their economic front has been jeopardised to a great extent. Corruption among the Naga politicians, bureaucrats, Government servants, contractors etc. is rampant. Majority of the Nagas is deprived of its due share of economic benefits coming out of various development plans and schemes. The affluent class, who has selfishly managed to accumulate wealth and property on large scale, hardly has real concern to the poor and deprived sections of the Nagas. Inclination towards materialism and consumerism among the affluent Nagas had made them dishonest, corrupt and selfish by attitude and behaviour. The material and consumerist attitude has badly influenced even the freedom fighters with the result that their commitment to the cherished goal has declined.

A question which has been irritating the every reasonable Naga mind is how to regain a wholesome permanent peace in the state of Nagaland and how to set the state in motion of progress and prosperity where every Naga may obtain the fullest opportunity to enjoy the life and upgrade his personality. The answer is not yet available. The problem of Naga peace is grave and complex. There are many factors related to the problem. Since the days of India's independence, a lot has been talked about the Naga freedom, independence, sovereignty etc. To achieve such goal much blood has been shed so far disturbing the peace and progress. Reality is that neither achievement has been achieved nor peace has been settled. Rather the cloud of suspicions among the Naga leaders either underground or over ground has weakened the freedom struggle on the one hand, and made the people frustrated and disappointed on the other. An independent Nagaland required highly developed economic system for which big efforts and huge finance are

needed. All the efforts hitherto applied by the peace-loving Naga public leaders, church leaders, leaders of various Non-Governmental Organisations to unite the different sections of the people and to stop factional killings have not yet produced desired results. The Government of India is not at all ready to consider the Naga' demand of independence and the underground sections are not prepared to accept any thing less than an independent Nagaland

I have taken the present work to make a critical survey of the political evolution of the state of Nagaland and to examine critically and analyse the factors, which have been involved in the Naga politics. Uniqueness of the Naga politics demands special analytical enquiry and thorough investigations in the events, which have taken place in Nagaland right from the British regime to date. This work also analyses the working of democratic system in Nagaland and people's participation in Naga politics. The work investigates into the rising new trends in the Naga politics such as use of money and muscle power in the electioneering process, politics of defection for power and prestige, mushroom growth of political parties etc. I hope the work would apprise the readers of entire Naga political history and enable the research scholars to further investigate in the Naga political affairs. This work will also help the college and university students specially of Northeast India to specialise in Naga politics. The book is researched-base. Facts and figures have been collected from authentic sources and have objectively been analysed and interpreted. My long stay in Nagaland and my close association with the Naga people have enabled me to observe the Naga political events from close angle. I think, it is my close rapprochements with the Naga people, which have enabled me to present such an authentic work on Naga politics.

As a part of my obligation to express my thankfulness and gratitude to the people who have helped me enough to present the work, firstly, I mention Professor Girin Phukon of Political Science Department of Dibrugrah University who spared his valuable time to discuss the Naga problems with me whenever or wherever we met together. Secondly, I owe deep gratitude to Professor K.M. Reddy, Professor of Political Science (Rtd.), Osmania University, Hyderabad, who while visiting the Naga land University encouraged me to present a political account of

Nagaland. Thirdly, I am highly grateful and obliged to my supervisor, Professor Bidyanand (Rtd.) Professor of Political Science, Magadh University, Bodh Gaya. In fact, the present work is the modified and up-to-date version of my Ph. D. thesis which I had produced under the kind supervision and guidance of my supervisor. I am highly indebted to Professor Bidyanand, my supervisor, who enabled me to present such work. Fourthly, my thanks also go to my *bosom* friends Professor Pradeshi Lal, Professor of Zoology of Nagaland University, Professor A. Lanu, Professor of Sociology, Nagaland University, Dr Chaturvedi reader and Head, Department of Botany, Nagaland University. All these scholars helped me in preparing my mind in taking up the work and prepare my viewpoints about the Naga politics. How can I forget my colleague Dr John Sema, who shared his opinions with me about the Naga politics. I am thankful to Dr John for his cooperation and valuable discussions in this regard. I also thank Dr Dipak Sinha, Lecturer in the Department of Chemistry of Nagaland University, who kept my morale always up by appreciating my efforts in this regard. Lastly, but not the least, I thank my beloved wife, Shobha, who provided me all the facilities which I needed during my long sitting to work and helped me in compiling the manuscript finally.

CHANDRIKA SINGH

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